EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS IN NORTHERN ALBERTA

WORKSHOP REPORT
JUNE, 1984

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NORTHERN ALBERTA
DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

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Contents

Northern Alberta Development Council	2
Introduction	4
The Study	6
The Workshops	13
The Mitigative Measures	21
NADC Recommendations	35
Follow-up Activities	38
Workshop Delegates	39

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Alberta
NORTHERN ALBERTA
DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

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June, 1984

The Northern Alberta Development Council has engaged in a number of activities relating to primary, secondary and further education over the past 10 years.

In late 1982, the Council decided to undertake a major review of the phenomenon of early school leaving in northern Alberta, with the view to proposing practical mitigative measures to reduce the incidence. In co-operation with Alberta Education and the Northland School Division, a Steering Committee representing northern school jurisdictions and interested agencies was struck to guide the review process.

The Technical Research Report and the three major review Workshops sponsored by the Northern Alberta Development Council in Grimshaw, Peace River and Lac La Biche in the Spring of 1984, are summarized on the following pages. The Council intends to follow up this important work on "Early School Leavers in Northern Alberta" with discussions involving appropriate government departments and agencies.

Local community-based follow-up seminars have also been encouraged. Three of these activities, in Keg River, Atikameg and Wabasca, are noted here.

Because of the importance of education to northern development, the Council also intends to undertake further activities regarding the Secondary Curriculum Review and the proposed revision of the School Act.

Norm Weiss, MLA
Chairman

NORTHERN ALBERTA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

1983/84

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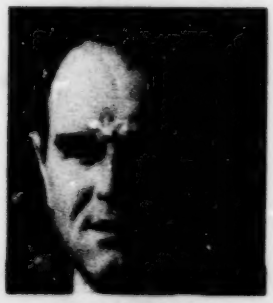

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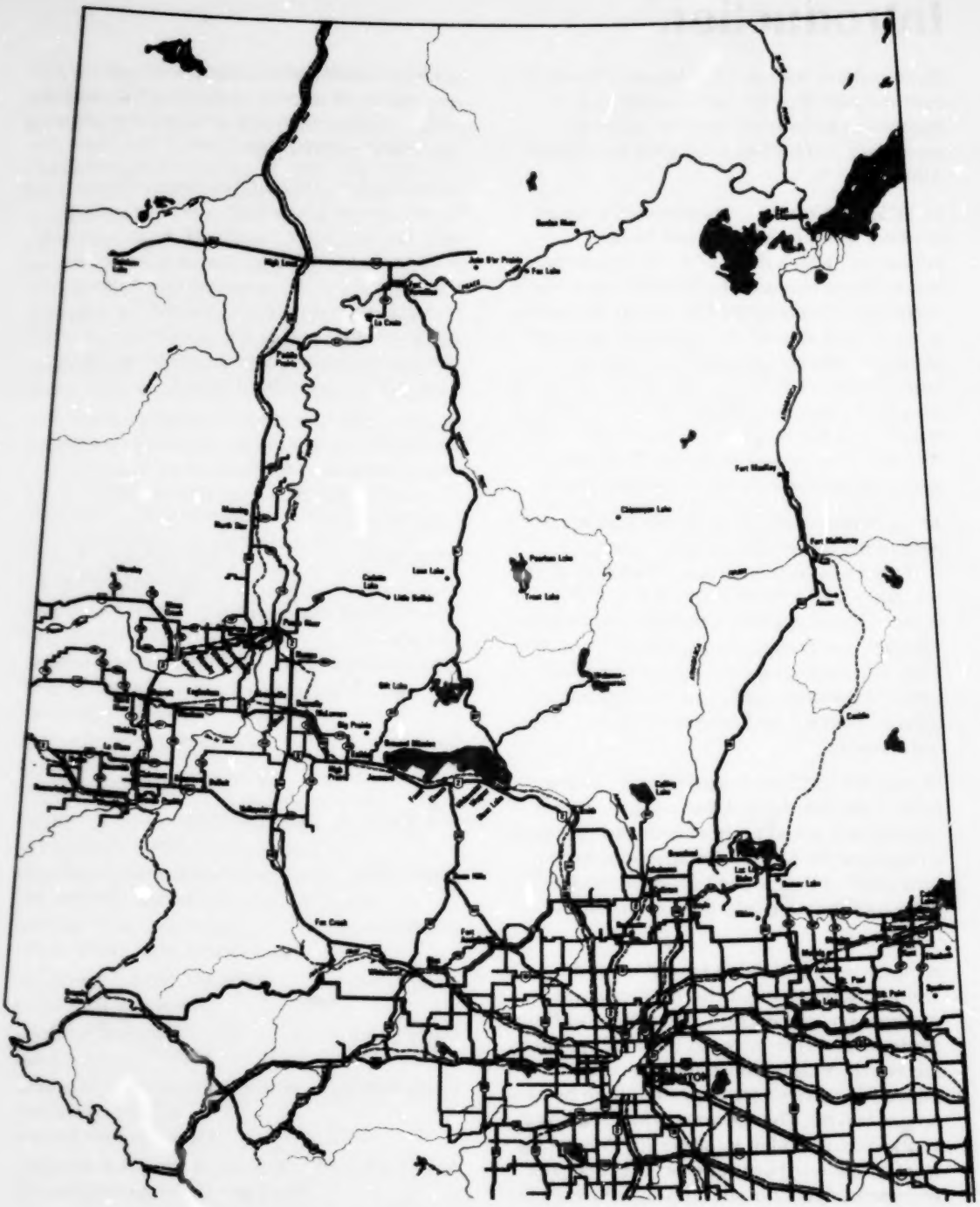

NORTHERN ALBERTA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL AREA

COMMUNITIES WITH POPULATION OVER 75 (1991 CANADA CENSUS)

PRIMARY HIGHWAY — SECONDARY ROAD — RAILWAY

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Introduction

The Northern Alberta Development Council over the past 10 years has engaged in a number of activities relating to primary, secondary and further education in northern Alberta.

In 1975, the Council commissioned a report entitled "Language Policy and Indian Education" which dealt with the linguistic reality of the community. In 1979, a task force report was prepared on Vocational Education in ID 23, and an evaluation completed of the Northern Alberta Development Council Student Bursary Program. The Council, in 1980, prepared a report entitled "An Inventory of Native Training Programs in Northern Alberta". This review listed the programs available and the number enrolled in each.

At the "Alberta North in the 80s Conference", held in the fall of 1980, concerns and recommendations emerged which had direct relevancy to the field of education. A large scale "Socio-Economic Overview of Northern Alberta" was commissioned by the Council in 1981. The findings indicated that the whole field of education and adult training was a topic of concern and interest to many northerners.

During the 1981 Northland School Division review, the Northern Alberta Development Council was asked to meet with and to submit a report to the McNeil Commission. At that time most of the Council's recommendations were incorporated into the Commissions's report.

A major review of Adult Education and Training services in northern Alberta was undertaken by the Council in 1982. This report made several references to the K-12 system in the North, and that several of the adult education services are impacted upon by early school leavers. The report was followed by a Workshop, attended by some 100 delegates from across northern Alberta. The delegates recommended a number of ways in which the system could be improved. The delegates also commented upon the inter-relationship of the K-12 system with adult education and training.

The Northern Development Branch also conducted a mini in-house survey of school jurisdictions in order to obtain rates of students leaving school early. This pre-survey resulted in six districts submitting information indicating dropout rates of 14.7% - 31% during the 1980-81 school year.

In September, 1982 the Northern Alberta Development Council discussed its priorities with Premier Peter Lougheed. At that time, it was felt that some follow-up was necessary regarding the K-12 issues identified in the past research and conferences. Further, it was perceived that one of the most important of these educational concerns pertained to the issue of the early school leaver.

In light of the subsequent NADC goal to investigate the problem, a Steering Committee was established. Members of the Steering Committee for the period March, 1983 - May, 1984 were:

Ernie Sehn	Chairman, Lac La Biche School Division #51
Charlie Vincent	Trustee, Lakeland Catholic School Division #150
John Schoepp	Administrative Assistant, Grande Prairie School Division #2357
Dave Young	Assistant Superintendent, Fort McMurray School District #2833
Ted West	Superintendent, Fort Vermilion School District #52
Frank Blonke	Superintendent, Northland School Division #61
Bea Neumeier	Supervisor of Programs, Northland School Division #61
Andy Hendry	Director, Student Services, Advanced Education
Harry Sherk	Planning Services, Alberta Education
Linda Beltrano	Senior Northern Development Officer, Northern Development Branch
Jerry Archibald	Director, Research & Analysis, Northern Development Branch

Alberta Education, Northland School Division and the Northern Alberta Development Council contributed funds to conduct a study to establish the incidence of early school leaving in northern Alberta and to suggest practical mitigative measures to reduce the

incidence. The Steering Committee established the terms of reference, various consulting firms were invited to submit proposals and a selection process was concluded in the Spring of 1983. The firm of HLA Consultants Ltd. was selected and commissioned to conduct the study. Data collection, interviews, literature searches, and mini-workshops, culminated in three major review workshops: one held in Grimshaw, February 22 - 23, 1984; one in Peace River, February 24 - 25, 1984; and one in Lac La Biche, February 27 - 28, 1984. The purpose of the Workshops was to review the study's findings and, more importantly, to review the suggested mitigative measures developed by HLA. Over 150 educators and citizens from across northern Alberta participated in the Workshops. The Grimshaw and Lac La Biche Workshops were designed for superintendents, principals, teachers and councillors, while the Peace River Workshop was slightly different in that it was designed specifically for the newly elected members of the Northland School Board. In all three cases, however, the goal of reviewing the measures and study findings remained the same.

This report summarizes the study process and its findings, and reviews the recommended mitigative measures as discussed at the Workshops. The recommendations of the delegates to the Northern Alberta Development Council are presented, along with follow-up actions of the Council.

The Study

The specific objectives of the study as established by the Steering Committee were:

i) to examine the situation of early school leavers in northern Alberta;

ii) to establish the extent of the early school leaver problem in northern Alberta;

iii) to develop and recommend a monitoring system which will enable students to be traced in their movements from one school to another and at the point of dropping out; and

iv) to develop and recommend practical and realistic mitigative measures to reduce the incidence of early school leavers.

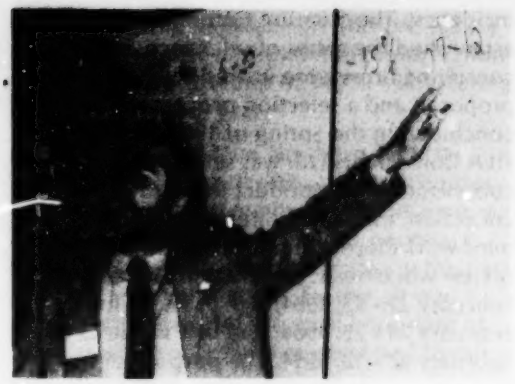
The Steering Committee accepted the HLA study design which involved extensive fieldwork and a commitment to educator involvement in the study process.

Each school jurisdiction in northern Alberta (38 jurisdictions; 130 schools) was requested to submit information regarding its early school leavers. A 75% return rate was obtained and 2,671 leavers were identified.

In addition to the mail survey of all school jurisdictions, six school jurisdictions were selected for in-depth interviewing: Grande Prairie School Division #2357, Fort McMurray School District #2833, Fort Vermilion School District #52, Lakeland Catholic School Division #150, Lac La Biche School Division #51 and Northland School Division #61. These were selected on the basis that they represented a sample of the communities and school jurisdictions in northern Alberta. The in-depth interviews consisted of 40 - 90 minute, confidential sessions guided by a questionnaire format instrument. The breakdown of the interviews conducted was:

School leavers	125
School stayers and high-risk	102
Parents	35
Community organizations	13
Teachers and administrators	55
Total	330

In addition to the above data collection, interviews were held with other individuals from central agencies in Edmonton. An extensive literature review of Albertan, Canadian and U.S. materials was conducted



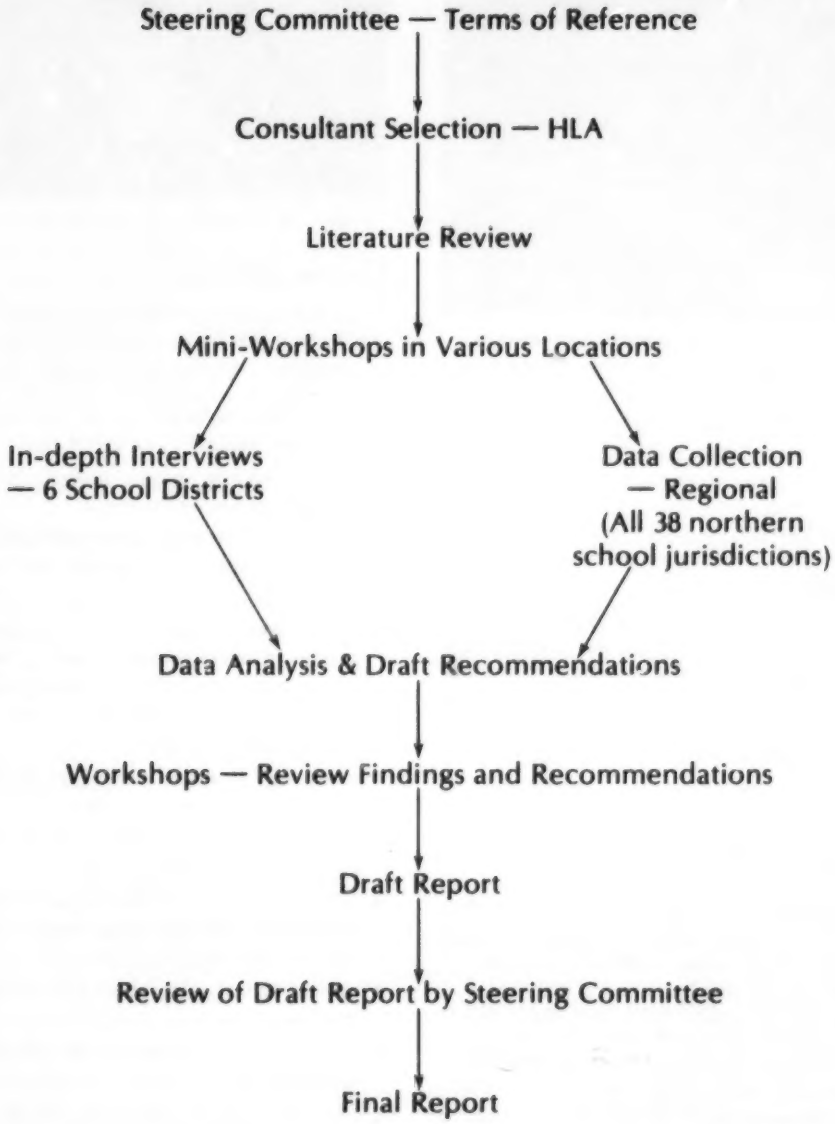
prior to the interview stage. This review is in the study's Technical Report.

All of the data and information obtained from the schools was coded to a computer format and the data entered in separate files. Simple frequencies and cross-tabulations were run for each of the files. In addition, factor and regression analysis was used to analyze the combined data files. The reader is encouraged to review the study's Technical Report for an in-depth perspective of the data analysis.

The February, 1984 Workshops were the final segment of the data collection phase. The purpose of the Workshops was to provide educators from northern Alberta with the opportunity to participate in formulating remedial measures which were realistically implementable. The Workshops were the operational culmination of the philosophy of involvement which guided the whole study process.

A set of five orientation sessions or mini-workshops was held in September, 1983. These early mini-workshops preceded the interview stage and were conducted in order to develop a working network of interested educators. At these mini-workshops, the study process was presented and data requested. Thus, to a certain extent, the February Workshops could be viewed as a follow-up data presentation stage with consultation and review of recommendations by the data givers. The study process is outlined in Figure 1.

Figure I
The Study Process


Steering Committee — Terms of Reference
Consultant Selection — HLA
Literature Review
Mini-Workshops in Various Locations
In-depth Interviews — 6 School Districts
Data Collection — Regional (All 38 northern school jurisdictions)
Data Analysis & Draft Recommendations
Workshops — Review Findings and Recommendations
Draft Report
Review of Draft Report by Steering Committee
Final Report

Findings

The data collected from the individual schools did not lend itself well to accurate measurements of early school leavers in northern Alberta. This is primarily because of its incompleteness. Two principal factors account for this:

i) not all of the schools responded to the request for information; and

ii) many schools could not identify their school leavers, particularly where students had left during the summer holiday. Of all of the 2,671 leavers reported, only 12% were identified as leaving at the end of the year and this is likely an underestimate.

There is no general agreement on the magnitude of the incidence of early leavers. The data emphasizes that there is a definite gap in student records; that schools do not really know what is happening to the students who do not complete Grade 12. This points to the need for a system that will monitor students.

Incidence

On the basis of the given data, the following are *estimates* of the incidence of early leaving in northern Alberta:

i) annual dropout rates for Grades 7 to 12 are in the neighborhood of 10 - 20%;

ii) this annual rate varies considerably between ethnic groups and localities. The variance is estimated at between 5% and 33%; and

iii) it is estimated that at least 50% of students who begin Grade 1 do not complete Grade 12 with a large variance depending on individual schools and school districts.

There was agreement from educators in northern Alberta in their concern about the rate of early school leaving. The data collection, the reaction from the Workshops and other discussions strongly concluded that there is a dropout problem. It is significant but its magnitude varies geographically and by ethnic groups.

Characteristics

From the data, the following characteristics of the 2,671 early school leavers recorded in northern Alberta were identified:

- 75% of the early school leavers were between 16 and 19 years of age;
- those who left before 16 likely came from remote and isolated areas;
- school leavers were generally several years behind in their schooling at the time of dropping out;
- Native leavers tended to complete fewer grades than Caucasians prior to leaving; 1/2 of the Native leavers left prior to Grade 9 completion compared to 1/5 for Caucasians;
- there was an equal male-female split in leavers;
- 1/5 of the leavers spoke Cree or another language at home;
- 72% of leavers had parents or other family members who had left school (compares to 46% for stayers);
- almost 1/3 of the leavers had problems with the law;
- 1/3 of the leavers did not live in two-parent households;
- 87% of leavers had friends who left school (compares to 60% for stayers);
- school leavers' families were fairly mobile with many (70%) having been in more than one centre;

- leavers had poor attendance records;
- 3/4 of the leavers were reported to be disciplinary problems;
- large numbers of leavers were at a failing level during their last year of school; 1/2 scored below 50% in Language, Reading and Math;
- intelligence test scores for leavers are only a bit lower than average; 66% scored below 100 in IQ compared to 50% for a normal population;
- many leavers did not feel positive about their relationship with teachers;
- leavers' favorite subjects were Math and Physical Education while the most disliked subjects were English and Science; and
- 60% of leavers mentioned friends as an element they liked about school and 44% mentioned sports. (The comparison for stayers is 27% friends and 34% sports.)

School Leaving Experience

- most early leavers first thought about leaving in Grade 9 or 10;
- most stated leaving was their own idea;
- few talked to school staff about leaving and most of those who did felt they were not understood;
- parents of the leavers were contacted by the school in less than 50% of the cases;
- 66% of parents report no one at school attempted to help their child remain in school;
- 50% of leavers did not have alternative plans;
- 50% say something could have been done to help keep them in school:
  - — better school counselling,
  - — better relationships with teachers, and
  - — better and more relevant courses;
- 50% had continued their education since leaving, mostly with vocational education courses.

At this point the reader is cautioned. These are the findings of the interviews. One must place these findings in a broader societal context. For example, the simple indication of the liking of the subject, Math, does not necessarily indicate a liking for Math, but rather it may be a subject in which the leaver feels a sense of accomplishment i.e., clearly defined right or wrong answers, etc.

Likewise, conflicts with teachers and school administrators may be indicators of a larger problem. Delegates at the Workshops cautioned the research team in the acceptance of the indicators at their face value and noted the complexity of the problem.

Reasons for Leaving School Early

From the interviews and school records, the research team also highlighted the reasons given for leaving. The following chart presents the major reasons given.

Table 1

Reasons For Leaving
Comparison of School Records and the View of Leavers and Educators

Reason Given For Leaving	School Records (%)	Leavers Interviews (%)	Educators (%)
No interest	22	31	56
Work	19	18	39
Just quit	11	X	X
Personal/family	10	22	X
Problems with teachers/administrators	X	32	15
Poor grades/would have failed	7	20	13
Peer pressure	X	14	X

X — not recorded

Example: 22% of the school records mentioned "no interest" as a reason for leaving school, compared to 31% of the leavers, 56% educators.

Factors

There was fairly consistent agreement among leavers, students and parents when they were asked to rate the importance of various factors with respect to early school leaving (see following Charts 1 and 2). The most important factors, which were identified by over half of the respondents, were:

- teaching approaches;
- unpleasant school atmosphere;
- social factors (e.g., drugs, alcohol, pregnancy);
- no home encouragement;
- home life; and
- student not interested.

Community group members, particularly, stressed problems with home life and lack of home encouragement. Analysis of the school records of the 2,671 students revealed that the reason given for leaving school differed with the sex of the student, ethnicity and rural or urban locations. Students leaving at different grade levels also offered different reasons.

Following the Workshops and numerous discussions with educators, a consensus was arrived at that there is a differentiation to be made among the urban, rural and Native dropout rates. Chart 2 outlines individuals seen as contributing to early school leaving.

Chart 1

Reasons for Leaving
As Rated by Early School Leavers and Parents

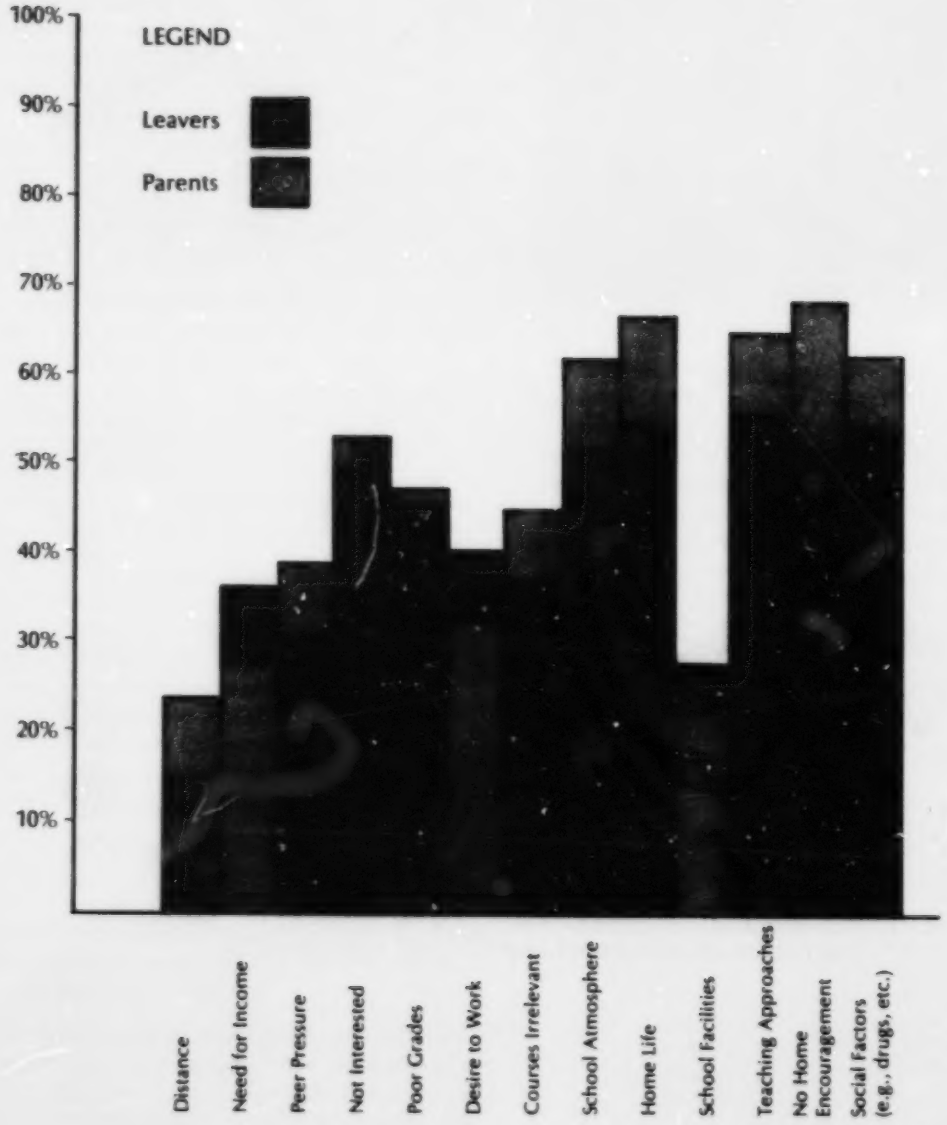
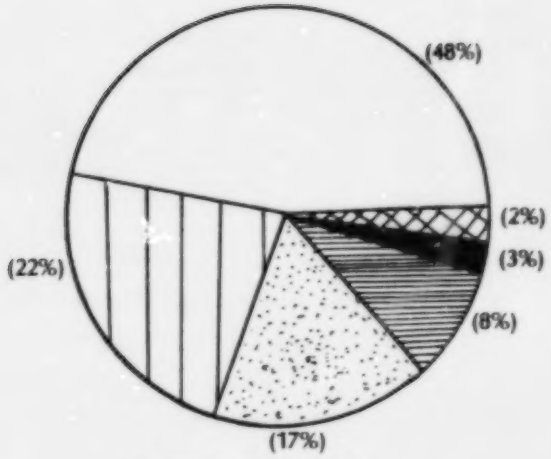
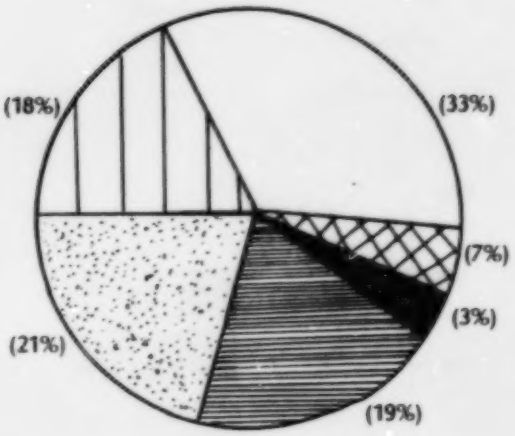


Chart 2

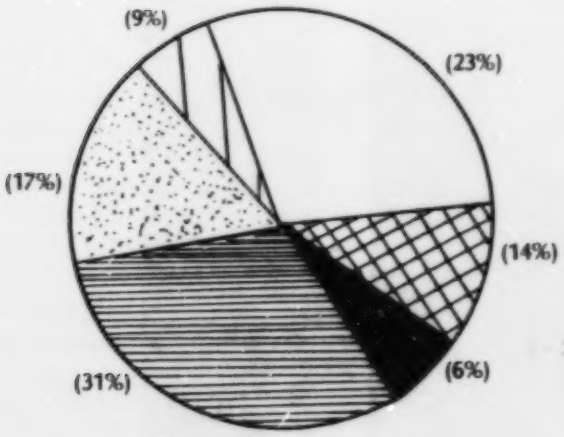
Responsibility for Early School Leaving



LEAVERS THEMSELVES



PARENTS



EDUCATORS

LEGEND

- Leavers Themselves
- Teachers/Administrators
- Friends
- Parents
- Potential Employers
- Community

NOTE: Leavers mentioned themselves as responsible for leaving 48%, Teachers 22%, Friends 17%, Parents 8%, Employers 3% and Community 2%.

The Workshops

Following the data collection stage, HLA Consultants Ltd. produced a list of recommended mitigative measures. These measures were presented to 158 delegates at three Workshops held in:

Grimshaw — February 22 - 23, 1984
Peace River — February 24 - 25, 1984
Lac La Biche — February 27 - 28, 1984

The **Grimshaw Workshop** involved 68 delegates from the northwestern part of the Northern Alberta Development Council area. The agenda saw opening remarks by Norm Weiss, Chairman of the Northern Alberta Development Council, followed by an overview of the study by HLA Consultants Ltd. The evening concluded with a reception at which delegates informally discussed the problems of early school leavers with Northern Alberta Development Council members and the HLA consulting team.

Day Two of the Workshop began with the daily procedures outlined by Norm Weiss, greetings from Mayor Helen Anderson of Grimshaw, and the presentation of the recommended mitigative measures by HLA. Following the presentation of mitigative measures, the delegates divided into discussion groups to review and evaluate the recommended programs presented by the consultants.

Spokespersons from each of the discussion groups reported back to the assembly following the NADC luncheon. HLA Consultants then discussed the report-back comments with the asembly. Joe Molho, Northern Alberta Development Councillor from Swan Hills, concluded the Workshop with a summary from a delegate's viewpoint.

The **Lac La Biche Workshop** involved 56 delegates from the northeastern part of the NADC area and utilized a similar agenda with town greetings from Mayor Ray Bouchard and summation remarks by Dick Upham, NADC Councillor from Ashmont.

The **Peace River Workshop** was of a different nature since its delegates were members of the newly elected Northland School Division Board and/or its local community school

committees. Peggy Haggard prepared special materials for the sessions and Frank Blonke, Superintendent of Northland School Division, delivered the closing remarks. The board members focused on the problem of early school leavers in the remote areas of their jurisdiction and reviewed the mitigative measured as presented by HLA Consultants Ltd.

Grimshaw

Mayor Helen Anderson
Greeting Delegates

Delegates Social Evening

Group Discussions →

Lac La Biche

Delegates Socializing
at Luncheon

← Discussion From the Floor

Group Leaders
Reviewing Materials

Peace River

Norm Weiss Opens Workshop
For Northlands Board Members

Delegates Preparing for
Report-back Session

Closing Remarks by Frank Blonke,
Superintendent of
Northlands School Division

Lac La Biche:
Delegates Registering

Peace River:
Reviewing Issues

Grimshaw:
Discussing Mitigative Measures

Lac La Biche:
A Lively Discussion

Priority List of Issues

The following is a priorized list of the issues which appear to be closely associated with early school leavers. The priorization is the result of the research conducted by HLA Consultants, feedback from the delegates at the three workshops, and further discussions of the issues by the Steering Committee.

1. *The Student-at-Risk:* this focuses on the identification of the student who is the potential early school leaver, and the need for intervention programs.
2. *Awareness of the Early School Leaver Problem:* to effectively solve this problem it is first necessary to become aware of the characteristics and the role that various people can play in encouraging students to stay in school longer.
3. *Student/Teacher Relationships:* the ways in which teachers and students relate to one another are very important in influencing students' attitudes toward school.

4. *Recognizing the Value of and Need for Education:* while in school, students may not be fully aware of the importance of education. What can be done to increase this awareness?
5. *Community/School Involvement:* the relationship which the parents and community have with the school is important in shaping attitudes towards education.
6. *Student Involvement:* student involvement in activities outside of the classroom is important in creating a sense of belonging and encouraging students to stay in school.
7. *Relevance of Education:* how well can students relate to the courses which are being taught? Does the content have meaning for them in their environment?
8. *Education After Dropping Out:* students wish to return to school at some point after they have left. How can this be made easier for them?
9. *Busing:* long bus rides affect the performance of students and may discourage them from staying in school. Alternatives to long bus rides should be considered.
10. *Teaching System:* involves a consideration of the approach to education, including a philosophy of education for communities, continuous progress and pre-school programs.
11. *High Teacher Turnover Rates:* teachers in the North tend to stay in their communities for a much shorter time than teachers elsewhere.
12. *Teacher Preparation:* How well are teachers prepared for the experience of living and teaching in northern communities?
13. *Education Alternatives for Remote Communities:* small schools and mobile education might be an alternative to no school at all in smaller centres.

Table 2

Summary of Issues, Goals and Suggested Measures

Issues	Goals	Suggested Measures
1. The Student-at-Risk	The student-at-risk is the critical element in an early school leaver mitigation program. Action programs for dealing with the potential early school leaver should be developed.	(a) Dealing with the Potential Leaver* (b) Living Skills Program* (c) Transfer to AVC/CVC (d) School Sabbatical
2. Awareness of The Early School Leaver Problem	Parents, community members, educators and students need to be informed about the extent of the early school leaver probiem, how to recognize potential dropouts, and what can be done to reduce the number of early leavers. A system of student records should be developed which allows better tracking of early school leavers. A school/community committee should be set up to monitor the early leaver situation and to identify the need for mitigative programs.	(a) Awareness Workshops and Seminars (b) Student Awareness Sessions (c) Government & Central Agency Awareness (d) Monitoring System* (e) School/Community Liaison Committee*
3. Student/Teacher Relationships	Better student/teacher relationships should be encouraged so that students feel positive about the school environment.	(a) Teacher Communication Skills* (b) Student Emphasis* (c) Smaller Schools
4. Recognizing The Value And Need for Education	Students with a better understanding of the value of education would be more likely to remain in school longer.	(a) Career Counselling* (b) Work Experience
5. Community/ School Involvement	Parents and the community should have greater involvement with local schools.	(a) Community Involvement* (b) Community Schools
6. Student Involvement	Students should be encouraged to participate in school activities so that they have a greater sense of belonging to the school and community.	(a) Sports Programs* (b) Field Programs* (c) Student Government

* Highest Priority

Table 2

Summary of Issues, Goals and Suggested Measures (Continued)

Issues	Goals	Suggested Measures
7. Relevance of Education	Courses offered in northern schools should be relevant to the geography and culture of the area.	(a) Curriculum Review and Adaptation*
8. Education After Dropping Out	At-risk students and students who drop out of school should have access to other educational alternatives.	(a) CVC/AVC Interface With Grade School System*
9. Busing	Alternatives to busing long distances to school should be considered.	(a) School Decentralization
10. Teaching System	Remote and isolated communities should develop a philosophy of education to guide the schooling of their children.	(a) Philosophy of Education
11. High Teacher Turnover Rates	Teachers should be encouraged to stay longer in remote northern schools.	(a) Teacher Orientation* (b) Teacher Paid Sabbatical (c) Integrated Teacher Housing
12. Teacher Preparation	Teachers should have better preparation and training for teaching in the North.	(a) Teacher Training* (b) Student Teaching (c) English as a Second Language Training*
13. Education Alternatives for Remote Communities	Alternatives which allow students to continue their education in their local community should be encouraged.	(a) Multi-subject, Multi-grade Classrooms* (b) Mobile Education* (c) Boarding*

* Highest Priority

The Mitigative Measures

Presentation of Recommended Measures

The following is a presentation of specific mitigative measures which may be developed to help students stay in school longer. The measures are grouped under each of the 13 issue areas that have been outlined in the previous section. The mitigative measures designated with an asterisk (*) are considered to be of highest priority on the basis of their potential effectiveness and impact in reducing the number of early school leavers. The priority of the individual measures was determined through an evaluation completed by educators and through the researchers' general assessment of the field work and study findings. In some cases the priority given the issue by Workshop delegates may not be as high as the overall priority given the mitigative measures by the researchers. The researchers have attempted to synthesize all the findings.

Where applicable, the comments of the Workshop delegates are noted.

1. The Student-at-Risk

Goal: The student-at-risk is the critical element in an early school leaver mitigation program. Action programs for dealing with the potential early school leaver should be developed.

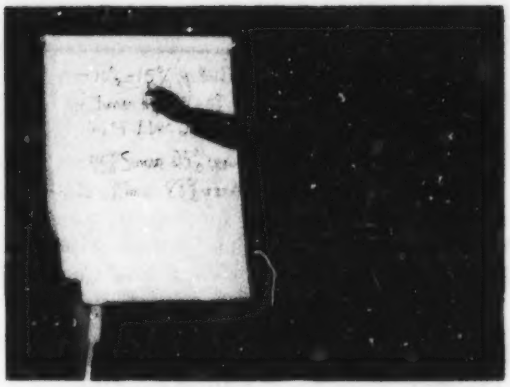
Mitigative Measures

*1.A Dealing with the Potential Early Leaver**

A planned, consistent approach should be developed to deal with the potential dropout. This program should reflect a local needs assessment and recognize the unique environments and capabilities of each locality and school. An action plan for developing such an approach is presented in the final section of this report.

Discussion by the delegates:

Participants viewed the identification of the potential leaver as an extremely high priority program. Preventive measures may be far more effective than an ad hoc measure after the fact. Delegates suggested a greater need for teacher training in guidance, counselling and need-identification. Case studies, such as the successful program at Edwin Parr High



School in Athabasca were cited by delegates as excellent models of an integrated preventive program.

*1.B Living Skills Program**

Recognizing that there are at-risk students who will likely become early leavers, non-academic program options should be developed to provide better preparation for the future. Living skills courses, in combination with work-study programs, may be very effective in providing the student with a good orientation to life outside the school.

Discussion by the delegates:

While the non-academic program options were viewed positively by most delegates, there were some reservations regarding the living skills aspects of the recommendation. Many delegates saw "living skills" as an area which could be effectively incorporated into other programs.

1.C Transfer to Alberta Vocational Centres and Community Vocational Centres

Students not suitable for an academic stream and who have few vocational education options available in their schools should, if posible, be transferred to Community Vocational Centres and Alberta Vocational

Centres. This also applies to students who need more flexibility than the grade school system provides. For these students a transfer to a Community Vocational Centre or an Alberta Vocational Centre would be preferable to leaving school altogether. It should be stressed that this recommendation is particularly applicable in those communities which do not have a high school but which either have a Community Vocational Centre or services of an Alberta Vocational Centre.

Discussion by the delegates:

The general consensus among delegates was that the concept was positive and would work at the field or community level. However, most recognized the difficulties involved in implementation. Implementation would require major policy changes at a provincial level.

1.D School Sabbatical

It is recognized that, regardless of the extent of prevention and intervention programs, some students will see a need to leave school early. One method which may help students to make the best decision for themselves is to grant a "sabbatical" from school. Such a program would require that students be assigned a school staff adviser whom they would contact on a regular basis. Counselling of this nature would ensure that students keep their options open and would facilitate and encourage a return to school for many students. This approach would have to be used very judiciously so that it would not be considered as an endorsement to leave school.

Discussion by the delegates:

This recommendation drew both positive and skeptical responses from the delegates. The positive responses focused on the idea that options would be kept open for a certain group of students; the negative responses indicated such a program may encourage students to leave.

2. *Awareness of the Early School Leaver Problem*

Because this is such a significant issue area, there are three goals which emerged out of the research and Workshop process.

Goal 1: Parents, community members, educators and students need to be informed about the extent of the early school leaver problem, how to recognize potential dropouts, and what can be done to reduce the number of early leavers.

Goal 2: A system of student records should be developed which allows better tracking of early school leavers.

Goal 3: A school/community committee should be set up to monitor the early leaver situation and to identify the need for mitigative programs.

Mitigative Measures

2.A Awareness Workshops and Seminars

These workshops should focus on increasing awareness of the problem, describing the characteristics of the leaver and the at-risk student, and outlining what can be done at different levels to mitigate against students' leaving school early. The information sessions should be directed to educators in northern schools, school board members, parents and the communities in general.

Discussion by the delegates:

The delegates considered the awareness question to be a high priority, and all the Workshops agreed there was a need for much

greater awareness on the part of educators, school board members and the community. Some delegates felt that educator workshops were not universally necessary but certainly needed in areas experiencing high dropout rates.

The delegates at the Grimshaw Workshop felt that some teachers may be reluctant to participate but they also commented that most teachers need extra training in guidance, need identification and counselling. This group also stressed that the problem is not solely educational but also a societal problem. Work therefore also had to be done in the whole community, especially among parents and students.

At all the Workshops, delegates agreed that the school boards must be made aware of the early school leaver problem and must be supportive of any mitigative measures adopted. Delegates noted that without school board commitment no action will take place. Workshops for boards should be relevant to each local jurisdiction.

Several delegates felt that community/parent workshops would be difficult to implement even though they were considered to be important. Since parents often will not appear for parent/teacher interviews, it was felt there would be attendance difficulties for early school leavers workshops. However, it was recognized that new ways have to be discovered to involve parents in a meaningful way and that such workshops may be appropriate in developing such involvement.

Delegates suggested that home visits would be useful and an encouragement of the community school concept would assist in heightening the parent awareness level.

2.B Student Awareness Sessions

Awareness sessions should be presented for junior high and high school students. The emphasis would be on developing an awareness of early school leaving, its consequences, the choices available, and what can be done to improve the situation. If workshops with students could be co-ordinated successfully with existing classroom programs such as social studies, an on-going learning experience could be provided.

Discussion by the delegates:

Delegates recognized the influence peers have on the early school leaver and felt this powerful influence should be capitalized on through effective workshops. Several delegates suggested a peer counselling system and/or a student/teacher buddy system. All realized that the student must be part of the process and that the lines of communication should be established prior to the decision to leave. The workshops suggested a media campaign be established which would encourage youth to complete their education.

2.C Government and Central Agency Awareness

Government departments, primarily Alberta Education and Alberta Advanced Education, have a key role to play in the implementation of programs that will deal with mitigating against early school leaving. Similarly, institutions, agencies and organizations that are centralized (i.e., Alberta Teachers Association, Alberta School Trustees Association, University of Alberta) also have a very important function. Awareness sessions should be provided for representatives of these groups.

Discussion by the delegates:

Delegates at all workshops agreed there should be greater co-operation and goal identification between Alberta Education and Advanced Education. They also commented that the Alberta Teachers Association and the Alberta School Trustees Association should be involved in any government or central agency workshops.

*2.D Monitoring System**

It is recommended that an early school leaver monitoring system be set up at the local level, and that it feed directly into a broader provincial system. This represents two systems.

i) The first is a technical computer-based system centralized by Alberta Education. It would be comprehensive and cover the entire province. This system might take some time to implement and might not meet in-depth local information requirements. A full description of such a system is contained in the Technical Report.

ii) The other type of monitoring system is a local data collection approach aimed at obtaining a limited amount of information on incoming students and those who are leaving. The responsibility for data collection would rest with the school. This would be an interim technique and/or would supplement the centralized data system mentioned above.

Discussion by the delegates:

The highest priority was given to this recommendation by delegates. Delegates agreed that there should be a mechanism in place to monitor children from ECS to Grade 12. Such a system would also provide a linkage to other schools and institutions when transfers occurred. Many also recommended that the linkage also be established with the AVCs, CVCs and universities. Delegates were extremely positive regarding this recommendation and strongly urged Alberta Education to implement such a system as soon as possible.

2.E School/Community Liaison Committee*

It is recommended that a committee be set up in each community consisting of students, teachers, parents and interagency representatives. The committee would deal with all aspects of the early school leaver problem including reviewing student-teacher-parent-community interactions.

A manual on the structuring, responsibilities, and mandate of this committee should be prepared by the appropriate local authorities. It should delineate clearly the objectives and parameters of committee involvement so that the committee does not infringe on the domain of the school and school administration. The committee would function in a manner that is complementary and supplementary to the role of the school.

Discussion by the delegates:

Both the Grimshaw and Lac La Biche Workshop delegates agreed that such a group would likely require a small budget and a clearly identified mandate. Delegates felt problems could arise if the committee was formally identified as an "Early School Leaver" because of a possible "stigma" associated to the title. Suggestions were made to the effect that a "Community School" committee could act as an umbrella for such a group.

While the delegates appeared to be generally positive about such a group at the concept level, there were divergent views regarding the implementation of the committee at the local level. Several thought the committee would be pivotal to all the "awareness workshops" and other mitigative measures; others preferred the group to be an informal body which would not necessarily become involved in identifying students or early school leavers.

3. *Student/Teacher Relationships*

Goal: Better student/teacher relationships should be encouraged so that students feel positively about the school environment.

Mitigative Measures

*3.A Teacher Communication Skills**

Teachers should be provided with instruction on how to achieve better communication skills in the classroom and with students in general. They should be required to take more courses in communications as part of their teacher training. This could be supplemented by a series of classroom communication seminars and in-service workshops.

Discussion by the delegates:

Many delegates felt that the issue was not one of skill but rather in the selection of the teacher. Teachers should be caring and considerate. The need for greater understanding and awareness was especially identified for the Native communities. Working in the Native communities requires different styles of communicating and teachers are often not prepared. Delegates advocated cross-cultural courses and the need for greater linkages with students and their community environments.

*3.B Student Emphasis**

There should be a shift toward more student emphasis in teaching at junior and the senior high levels. A teaching system should be developed that permits more teacher-student contact than is the case at present. To effect this, it is recommended that the schools retain a homeroom, class-group type of system. This is especially relevant to the organization, administration and functioning of large composite schools in urban centres. In some schools, the homeroom system has been done away with, eliminating the students' sense of belonging to a class, grade or group. The campus approach is not conducive to good relationships which students require throughout the grade school system.

Discussion by the delegates:

Many delegates identified the junior high level as a group requiring special attention. At the junior high level greater contact with the homeroom teacher is needed with a gradual progression to the campus approach. The campus approach was described as being too impersonal. Opportunities should be provided for student/teacher interaction within the high school system.

3.C Smaller Schools

Smaller schools facilitate better student/teacher contact and provide students with a better sense of involvement than do larger schools. In addition, they provide an alternative to long bus rides and boarding out by locating the school in the community.

It is recognized that small schools also have their disadvantages and are not desirable in all cases. It is suggested that, where feasible, consideration be given to the development of small schools. However, when compared to

the alternative of "boarding" students out of the community, small schools utilizing a combination of academic programs, mobile facilities, and correspondence supervision services should be seriously considered. The community vocational centre could serve as a successful "model".

Discussion by the delegates:

This recommendation received divergent reaction from educational professionals, but positive reaction from the delegates attending the Northland Workshop. Skeptical delegates were concerned that the "small is beautiful" concept may not be practical because size restricts program delivery. Positively minded delegates recognized the serious problems which presently exist when transferring students to larger communities where the only option is "boarding" homes. The Lac La Biche Workshop identified the importance of the quality of life; i.e., school atmosphere and sense of community is paramount and supercedes school size.

4. *Recognizing the Value and Need for Education*

Goal: Students with a better understanding of the value of education would be more likely to remain in school longer.

Mitigative Measures

*4.A Career Counselling**

A career counselling program, which is part of the curriculum, and is compulsory for all students, should be developed for all schools. Provision for adaptation to unique local conditions should be provided in the program. Given that the highest frequency of dropouts (70%) occurs after the completion of Grade 9, this program should be introduced in Grade 7 at the latest, and run through to Grade 12.

Discussion by the delegates:

All workshops concurred that career awareness should begin as early as the elementary grades. More human and budgeting resources are required for the implementation of such a program. Counselling should also be adaptive to local needs.

4.B Work Experience

It is recommended that a local work experience program be developed or expanded. A standard model which forms part of the curriculum, yet has provisions for adaptation to local circumstances, should be adopted. The program should involve direct work experience with local businesses. This may be especially beneficial as part of a synthesized approach for dealing with high-risk students. It would also serve to enhance parent-community involvement in the school.

Discussion by the delegates:

Delegates from Grimshaw agreed that there is a value in a work experience program but it requires good planning and organization. The Lac La Biche Workshop delegates recognized the value of the program but did not consider it the total answer to alleviating the problem of early school leavers. It was noted that many of the school jurisdictions have such programs in operation.

5. *Community/School Involvement*

Goal: Parents and the community should have greater involvement with local schools.

Programs

*5.A Community Involvement**

Schools and communities should undertake a thorough review of parent-community involvement. This could be a function of the school/community liaison committee. A manual which lays out the method of evaluations, the objectives of community involvement, role of the committee, and means of achieving these objectives would be beneficial. A plan for encouraging the desired involvement could then be drawn up and implemented at the community level. The unique characteristics of each centre would be reflected in the plan.

Teachers and the schools should encourage more events that promote community-parent-school contacts. Suggestions in this area include the following:

- more frequent parent-teacher interviews;
- an active local school committee to be directly involved in meaningful education activities, discussions and consultation;
- parent contacts that do not deal exclusively with negative behavior in crisis situations but also focus on positive behavior;
- parents' day at the school (to attend with students);
- teacher home visits with the student present, for all grade levels;
- extensive use of parent volunteers to assist, not replace, teaching staff; and
- an upward extension of the Early Childhood Services (ECS) parent program.

Discussion by the delegates:

Once again, the recommendation was viewed as a positive one. Delegates suggested that the present ECS involvement be carried on to other grades. Full support was given the recommended measure.

5.B Community Schools

The use of school facilities should not be limited to teaching students during the day. The school's physical plant should be treated as a community asset to be used by the community members. Evening use by adults and students should be encouraged and

activities should be programmed during the day if space permits. Other uses include adult education, Community Vocational Centre and Alberta Vocational Centre courses, special seminars and workshops, and various community meetings and activities. Rather than building separate facilities in a community, additions should be made to the school's physical plant. This would create an important focal point in the community, remove the fear of schools, and, through a joint adult-student sharing of facilities, positively influence students' impressions of school.

Discussion by the delegates:

The Workshop representatives viewed the "Community School Concept" as a success and expressed regret over reductions in the existing program.

6. Student Involvement

Goal: Students should be encouraged to participate in school activities so that they have a greater sense of belonging to the school and community.

Mitigative Measures

*6.A Sports Program**

It is recommended that strong sports programs be developed for all of the schools in the North. While teachers, parents, and students should be involved in the planning and running of the programs, student participation

should be maximized. In addition to a good intramural program, extramural participation should be encouraged since it contributes to fostering a positive school spirit.

Discussion by the delegates:

This program was viewed as a solution applicable for only some students. Delegates considered the central issue to be the creation of a sense of belonging which can be achieved through involvement. It was also noted that sports programs tend to involve teachers who are interested; thus, in many instances, it may be the actor and not the program that makes the program work. Generally, all were in favor of programs which get the student involved.

6.B Field Programs

It is recommended that schools have a well planned field program. This is especially important given the relative isolation of many northern Alberta communities. Field trips which offer access to academic, cultural and economic centres outside of northern Alberta should be offered throughout the year.

Discussion by the delegates:

All delegates noted the costs associated with field programs. The Lac La Biche delegates felt field experiences for non-isolated areas will probably not be a main factor in keeping students in school. The Workshop delegates also requested that a distinction between isolated and non-isolated communities be made, since field programs vary and differ in importance for the two.

6.C Student Government

Student government maximizing student participation should exist at junior and senior high levels. For example, there might be a central government with various student committees for sports, field programs, clubs, and community relations. School staff should provide a clear mandate for the functioning of the student government and then be involved only in a guidance role. A manual which provides a model and mandate description for student government would be helpful. To be most meaningful, it is important that all students, and particularly those at risk, be encouraged to participate in the governmental process. High levels of student participation should be rewarded. Extreme care must be taken to make sure that involvement is not limited to the high achiever.

Discussion by the delegates:

The student government program suggestion would give students a sense of belonging but questions did arise regarding the operation of such a program. Agreement among delegates was reached regarding the need for student involvement, but questions remained regarding implementation and operation of such a program.

7. Relevance of Education

Goal: Courses offered in northern schools should be relevant to the geography and culture of the area.

Mitigative Measures

*7.A Curriculum Review and Adaptation**

A review of the curriculum and its ability to meet northern education needs should be undertaken. The review should evaluate the relevance of an academic stream for students from communities where schools don't go to Grade 12 and who thus have limited opportunity to continue their schooling. It should also examine the relevance of the subject content to local conditions and

occupational opportunities. This assessment should tie in directly with the curriculum review which is currently being conducted by the Department of Education.

Discussion by the delegates:

Delegates noted that secondary school curriculum is presently under review by the government. The Lac La Biche delegates suggested that local initiative was not used enough; to quote a delegate, "the central issues are local initiative and teacher involvement in curriculum development". More in-service training for teachers in order to heighten their awareness of how to adapt their curriculum was called for by the delegates.

8. Education After Dropping Out

Goal: At-risk students and students who drop out of school should have access to other educational alternatives.

Mitigative Measures

*8.A Community Vocational Centre/ Alberta Vocational Centre Interface With Grade School System**

The Alberta Vocational Centres and Community Vocational Centres should interface directly with the grade school system to provide for the education of those who drop out. There are several aspects to this:

- Alberta Vocational Centres and Community Vocational Centres seem to be operating at capacity now and waiting lists are common. Capacity in these institutions should be expanded according to need;
- these further education centres might contract with the school districts to offer courses or teach groups of students in the grade schools. These courses would serve to complement the grade school course offerings.
- the 18-year-old age restriction for enrollment in Alberta Vocational Centres and Community Vocational Centres should be removed. This would serve to eliminate the lack of education alternatives for the dropout who is less than 18 years of age.

In centres where Community Vocational Centres and Alberta Vocational Centres do not exist, mobile labs and programs would be a possible alternative to complement the junior and senior high schools.

Discussion by the delegates:

Both Workshops agreed the Alberta Vocational Centres and Community Vocational Centres offer programs which would complement and supplement the courses typically offered through local school divisions. Their method of delivering programs was also regarded as valuable. Transfers between the AVC/CVC system and the regular education system were seen as positive but difficult to implement unless greater lines of communication were established and policy altered. If such a transfer program could be implemented, most delegates anticipated a greater demand for courses offered by the Alberta Vocational Centres and Community Vocational Centres.

The delegates were very divided over the 18-year-old age restriction. Grimshaw delegates requested its retention while the Lac La Biche and Northland delegates requested its removal.

9. *Busing*

Goal: Alternatives to busing long distances to school should be considered.

Mitigative Measures

9.A School Decentralization

It is recommended that the need for small, decentralized schools be considered in to encouraging students to stay in school longer. Decentralization situations where long bus rides to central would shorten bus rides, allow schools schools presently exist. This program would serve several objectives favorable to encouraging students to stay in school longer. Decentralization would shorten bus rides, allow schools to be established in the community, and would likely result in better student-community-parent-teacher interaction. A negative aspect to this approach is that program offerings in these schools would be limited, and innovative alternatives would have to be implemented. Such innovations to supplement a small core program could include mobile vocational trailers, liaison with local Community or Alberta Vocational Centres, individualized student instruction programs, supervised correspondence courses, and multi-grade classrooms.

Discussion by the delegates:

The return to the decentralized school system requires increased financial support. The concept is applicable possibly to some of the more remote locations but economies of scale in the more urbanized areas prevent the smaller school concept from being implementable. Once again delegates were split in their viewpoints.

10. *Teaching System*

Goal 1: Remote and isolated communities should develop a philosophy of education to guide the schooling of their children.

Goal 2: The school system would be adapted to meet the special needs of students in remote and isolated areas.

Mitigative Measures

*10.A Philosophy of Education**

It is recommended that a philosophy of education be defined for all remote and isolated communities. This philosophy should be developed by local community boards and community members; the participants would have to be instructed on how to use their own resources to define this philosophy. The school board and school would then have the responsibility of translating this philosophy into courses and programs for the students.

Discussion by the delegates:

The recent changes to the Northland School Division Act and the creation of a local board were viewed as positive steps towards re-thinking northern education. The idea of developing a philosophy of education for remote areas was endorsed by the delegates.

Mitigative Measures

*10.B Primary Grade Failures**

Remote and isolated areas should implement an alternative to the existing pass-fail-repeat system, particularly at the primary levels. A logical alternative is a unit-continuous promotion system in which students progress continuously, unit by unit, according to individual levels of preparedness and ability.

Discussion by the delegates:

Representatives acknowledged that positive reinforcement and a sense of achievement is

needed by the at-risk student. To operate within a system which stresses development rather than pass-fail may be a positive step. Delegates were also realistic in that an evaluation standard had to be established and that eventual achievement of that standard by the student was necessary in order to proceed to the next level of education.

10.C Pre-school Programs

As evidenced by high primary grade failure rates, many students in remote areas are not ready to begin school. It is recommended that, through the co-operation of the school and community, pre-school programs be introduced in all communities where they do not currently exist.

Discussion by the delegates:

Delegates stressed the importance of mental versus chronological age. Age of entry into the system greatly affects success or failure rates and, thus, the development of self-esteem and a sense of worth.

11. High Teacher Turnover Rates

Goal: Teachers should be encouraged to stay longer in remote northern schools.

Mitigative Measures

*11.A Teacher Orientation**

Teachers should receive an in-depth orientation to both the school and the local community in which they will live. This can best be achieved through a co-operative effort by the school district, the community and the local school. One approach would be to orient the prospective employee to the community prior to offering him/her a teaching position. If direct exposure is a difficulty, then a film/photo presentation on the community should be prepared along with a description of local conditions. This should be a realistic portrayal of community life, showing both the positive and negative aspects of the school and community.

Discussion by the delegates:

The need for greater teacher orientation to the more remote communities has been recognized by the Northland School Division. The recruitment process has become more selective. Delegates also suggested that more "in-service" cultural courses might assist in teacher orientation.

11.B Teacher Paid Sabbatical

A system of paid sabbatical leave might encourage teachers in remote and isolated communities to stay longer by providing them with a periodic break. There are many options for putting such a program into operation. For example, eligibility might come after a specified period of time such as three or four years and the sabbatical might be for a duration of six months to one year. The program could also vary depending on the degree of community isolation and teacher merit. The specific details would have to be worked out through consultation with school boards and school administrators and would probably vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. In conjunction with this, a teacher exchange program with other areas of the province, and with retired teachers, might be worthy of consideration.

Discussion by the delegates:

Teacher paid sabbaticals were viewed in both a positive and negative way. Delegates discussed the disruptive impact they could have on the classroom and yet they recognized the need for upgrading and rest. Teachers from the

remote areas also recognized the need to leave their communities frequently (2-3 months) for a few days of rest and relaxation. Delegates also suggested that exchange programs might also be beneficial to teachers from remote areas.

11.C Integrate Teacher Housing

Teachers in northern communities tend to live apart from the other residents. An expression used to describe the housing for teachers in remote communities is "the compound". The housing is often fenced, and is structurally different from other community housing. This sets the teachers aside and discourages their participation in the community. Where possible, staff housing should be integrated with community housing, and fencing should be removed.

Discussion by the delegates:

This recommendation was not seen as a critical recommendation. Delegates agreed the fencing arrangements could be removed or re-adjusted but they did not see the physical plant as a cause of dropouts.

12. Teacher Preparation

Goal: Teachers should have better preparation and training for teaching in the North.

Programs

*12.A Teacher Training**

Teachers with an interest in northern teaching should pursue a program of studies which emphasizes cultural education. The current program at the University of Alberta Department of Education should be reviewed for its adequacy in meeting cultural education requirements applicable to northern Alberta Native cultures. Students must be made aware of this education option. In addition, off-campus institutions might co-operate with the university or independently offer teacher preparation programs in northern studies.

Discussion by the delegates:

Many delegates felt present university offerings in this area were too minimal and often non-effective. The delegates also recognized the problem of the uniqueness of each community; thus, the suggestion that each local board have input into teacher orientation to communities was made. Support was also given to in-service courses and courses which accurately depict the North and its environment.

*12.B Student Teaching**

Student teachers at the University of Alberta should be encouraged to take their practicum in remote and isolated communities. This would have to be arranged jointly by the university and the participating school boards. The program would foster a better appreciation of the demands of teaching and living in northern communities.

Discussion by the delegates:

This recommendation was viewed as a positive measure. This would allow the prospective teaching candidate exposure to various different environments in which he or she would be employed. Such a program would also eliminate high turnover rates since teachers might return for cultural update courses in order to cope with the more remote regions.

*12.C English as a Second Language Training**

In schools where there are high Native enrolments, primary grade teachers, and to a lesser extent teachers at higher levels, should

be trained in teaching English as a second language. Currently many children begin school speaking only their native language. Teachers are often unprepared to deal with the situation effectively and the student's first exposure to the classroom is one of frustration and failure. Where it is not possible to have properly trained teachers, a Native teacher aide should be in the classroom.

Discussion by the delegates:

Not only should primary grade teachers be trained in English as a second language but the entire K-12 system should be aware of the techniques associated with English as a second language.

Delegates also thought that the use of native language in the schools until basic skills are achieved would be favored by the communities.

13. *Education Alternatives for Remote Communities*

Goal: Alternatives which allow students to continue their education in their local community should be encouraged.

Mitigative Measures

*13.A Multi-Subjects, Multi-Grade Classrooms**

Small high schools having several grades and several subjects taught in one classroom, should be developed. The local responsibility for this should partially rest with the teachers who would be involved.

History has proven this approach can work if the proper teachers are involved. Vocational and business-related courses are made available on a mobile basis. If correspondence programs are integrated into the system, and if modern technology is used to enhance individualized instruction, there is every reason to be optimistic about this new approach. Some communities are presently using this method with positive results.

Discussion by the delegates:

The educators acknowledged the problem in the remote areas but disagreed with this approach for the more urban schools. The discussions centered on program delivery i.e.,

the smaller the school the more limited the programs available. Delegates also recognized the increased costs associated with numerous small schools.

*13.B Mobile Education**

Mobile education was strongly identifed as a workable alternative by those interviewed in this study. It has the potential to provide education in certain subject areas in a cost-effective manner. This is especially true for subjects such as vocational education that cannot be taught easily in smaller schools. It is recommended that models for mobile education be reviewed and implemented. This can be done in conjunction with the Community Vocational Centres and Alberta Vocational Centres.

Discussion by the delegates:

This recommendation was very much favored by delegates. Costs were recognized as a problem but delegates felt that more services could be delivered by mobile facilities both to the student and the teacher.

*13.C Boarding**

Where there may be alternatives to boarding out other than developing more local schools, a more compatible boarding situation must be developed. It would necessitate several things:

- providing prior orientation for the students;
- having a group home that would include other children from the student's community;

- having house parents who understand the culture and could devote time to helping the children in their adjustment; and
- making the school and teachers aware of the background of the students to help facilitate their adjustment.

Discussion by the delegates:

The majority of delegates agreed boarding was not favorable. They felt that boarding students lost much of the parental influence necessary to keep students motivated. Many delegates suggested the group homes as a much more effective alternative to the boarding system. However, it should be noted that the delegates at the Northland Workshop strongly preferred offering education in the local community rather than sending their students out.

Recommendations of the Northern Alberta Development Council

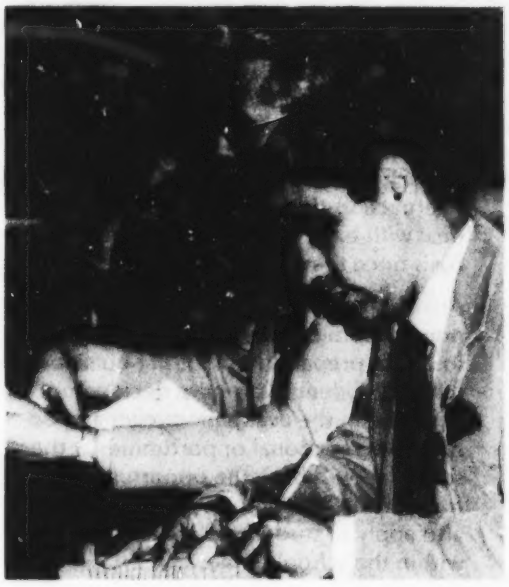
After careful consideration of the Early School Leavers Technical Report and the feedback from delegates who attended the Workshops, the Northern Alberta Development Council proposes the following recommendations for consideration:

(1) That greater awareness be made of the early school leaver problem throughout the North. Local communities and school boards should be encouraged to take several definite actions to help heighten awareness and resolve the issue such as: a) workshops for educators, school boards, parents, students and government agencies; b) dissemination of relevant early school leaver information; and c) the presentation of briefs to various government committees presently concerned with education in Alberta.

(2) That Alberta Education be encouraged to develop a monitoring system which would provide easily accessed information on school leavers. The monitoring system should begin upon the entry of the student to the Alberta Education system and follow the student until completion of Grade 12. Such a monitoring system would assist in determining areas experiencing high dropout rates, in plotting the rate of dropouts across the province and in comparing and evaluating over time the success of remedial programs. A monitoring system could also be very useful in dealing with student transfers.

(3) That Alberta Education and local school boards be strongly encouraged to develop relevant support programs which would help keep students in school. For example: a) career and guidance counselling programs as part of the curriculum which is compulsory for all students from Grade 7 to Grade 12; and b) development or continuance of work experience programs which are adaptable for local circumstances.

(4) That Alberta Education and Advanced Education expand vocational education and industrial arts programs in northern schools through sharing arrangements between school boards, CVCs, AVCs and mobile facilities.



(5) That Alberta Education and local school boards be aware of the importance of extra curricular activities such as sports programs, field trips, and extensive student government. The creation of an atmosphere which encourages and fosters student involvement and participation is vital to lowering school leaver rates.

(6) That Alberta Education and local school boards recognize the importance of the "Community School Concept". The school's physical plant should be treated as a community facility. Teachers and schools should encourage significant and meaningful participation with the community in a) educational matters; and b) community concerns and issues.

(7) That Alberta Education and local school boards strongly encourage greater meaningful involvement of parents in local school systems. This recommendation would include adopting and implementing the "Early Childhood Services" philosophy of parent involvement from Grades 1 - 9.

(8) That Alberta Education, Advanced Education and local school boards implement programs to encourage more at-risk students to be identified and to remain in school. The preparation of a school and teacher manual is needed to describe the at-risk students and provide alternative ways of handling the student. The school should develop a consistent approach to these students and should deal with each student on an individual basis once they are recognized.

At-risk students should be provided with non-academic courses including life skills to better prepare them for life outside school. Students who have decided not to continue in the academic stream and do not have vocational opportunities at the school should have the opportunity to transfer to CVCs and AVCs. This should also apply to students who cannot cope within the school framework.

(9) That Alberta Education and Advanced Education be encouraged to make returning to any school easier for students who have dropped out of the school system. AVCs and CVCs should have a direct interface with the grade school system. Capacity in these systems should be expanded according to need. School districts should be able to contract with CVCs and AVCs to provide courses or teach groups from the regular system. The restriction of enrolment of 18 years old should be removed from CVCs and AVCs.

(10) That northern school boards should seek to find and implement, at least at the primary levels (K-9), an alternative system to the pass-fail-repeat system. A logical alternative is a unit-continuous promotion system where a student progresses continuously, unit by unit, according to level of preparedness and ability. While no repetition is ever necessary, such a system should not preclude evaluation of the student and a sense of competition.

(11) That, as evidenced by the high failure rate, many of these students are not ready to begin school. It is recommended that, in co-operation with the school and the community, preschool programs be introduced in all communities where they do not currently exist.

(12) That local school boards, Alberta Education and the Alberta School Teachers Association recognize the need for continuous upgrading, regular performance evaluation and teaching professionals. Such programs will enable school systems to improve the quality of their instructional services.

(13) That Alberta Education, the Northland School Division and other divisions with Native populations recognize that:

(a) Where possible, the administration of the education system should be modified to better meet local conditions in remote and isolated areas. The objectives are to provide a more meaningful education for the residents.

(b) The philosophy of education for all remote and isolated communities should be identified. The school should act only as a catalyst. The local community boards and the community, in general, should develop this philosophy. To prepare the community to do this, it is

suggested that a mobile specialist team go into each community. They would teach the boards and the community how to use their own resources to develop this philosophy. Coincidentally, this team could teach the community what the school is all about and how to interface with it. It would also teach the school staff how to interface with the community. The school board and the school would then have the responsibility of translating this philosophy into courses and programs for the students.

(c) Teachers should be better prepared to teach in a cross-cultural setting and in a different geographic situation. A program of studies which emphasizes cultural awareness should be available to, and taken by, teachers interested in teaching in the North. The University of Alberta should review its cultural education requirements as they apply to northern Alberta Native cultures. Also, students in education should be made aware that this option of northern and Native education exists.

(d) Primary teachers in schools where many children enter speaking only a native language should be trained in English Second Language teaching methods. Lack of training may result in frustration for both the teacher and student. Where this is not possible, a Native aide should be present in the classroom.

(e) In those cases where students must leave a community to continue their education, priority should be given to establishing group homes in the closest appropriate community offering high school. These group homes are an extension of the boarding home program whereby private homes could accommodate more than one student.

Follow-Up Activities

Local Awareness Seminars

As follow-up to the major review on Early School Leavers in Northern Alberta, the Northern Alberta Development Council embarked on three experimental community awareness seminars.

These seminars were held in Keg River, Atikameg and Wabasca/Desmarais. The Keg River session was conducted on May 5, 1984 and involved approximately 25 local people — students, teachers, local board members and parents. On June 6, 1984, a similar session was held in Atikameg where over 30 local residents attended and expressed their concerns on the early school leaver problem. On June 7, 1984 the Wabasca/Desmarais session saw 10 individuals in attendance.

The interest of those in attendance was very keen. There were a significant number of concerns expressed — the key ones being:

- the need for group homes (rather than boarding homes);
- a half-time counsellor to work in all grades;
- a community van to encourage extra-curricular activities and parent involvement;
- better screening of teachers including advance orientation trips to the community before they are hired;
- curriculum to include local history and culture;
- vocational-interest types of courses to include small motors, art, welding, typing, computer, music, carpentry, etc.
- mobile facilities and special teams; and
- supervised correspondence courses.

Additional workshops are planned for Fort McMurray, Cold Lake/Bonnyville, Chipewyan Lakes, Lac La Biche, Trout Lake/Peerless Lake, and Fort Vermilion.

Brief Presentations

Apart from detailed follow-up discussions with various ministers and department officials on early school leavers, the Northern Alberta Development Council is preparing a major presentation to the Secondary Curriculum Review Committee.

A second major follow-up activity will involve an intensive review of the School Act and comments to the Review Committee and the Minister of Education prior to major revisions being contemplated.

Workshop Delegates
Grimshaw Workshop

ARCHIBALD, Jerry	Northern Development Branch, Peace River
BARR, Allison	Peace River School Division, Peace River
BELTRANO, Linda	Northern Development Branch, Peace River
BLASKOVITS, Norm	Fairview Separate School Division, Fairview
BLONKE, Frank	Superintendent, Northland School Division, Peace River
BOTSFORD, Stu	Northland School Division, Grouard
CALAHASEN, Pearl	Northland School Division, Peace River
CASWELL, Phil	Northland School Division, Peace River
CRADDOCK, Ron	Spirit River School Division, Spirit River
CUNNINGHAM, Archie	CVC, Slave Lake
CYMBOL, Steve	Alberta Education, Grande Prairie
DUIGOU, Lou	Superintendent, Peace River Separate School Division, Peace River
EDGAR, Barry	Grande Prairie School District, Grande Prairie
FINNERTY, Murray	Northern Development Branch, Peace River
FRANZONI, Ed	HLA Consultants, Edmonton
GILL, Peter	County of Grande Prairie, Beaverlodge
GRANT, Dennis	Superintendent, Grande Prairie Catholic School District, Grande Prairie
GROVUM, Richard	Northland School Division, Peace River
GUNTRIP, Dick	Northland School Division, Loon Lake
HAGGARD, Peggy	Northland School Division, Peace River
HANSON, Les	Northland School Division, Peace River
HAMPEL, Ken	Fort Vermilion School District, Fort Vermilion
HAMM, Menno	Fort Vermilion School District, LaCrete
HUNTER, Bill	Grande Prairie School District, Grande Prairie
JACKSON, Roger	Northern Development Branch, Peace River
KATERENCHUK, Gene	Northland School Division, Peace River
KINGDOM, Dan	Grande Prairie Catholic School District, Grande Prairie
KLEIN, Ken	Northland School Division, Trout Lake
LAZORUK, Barry	Northern Alberta Development Council, Rycroft
LeFRANÇOIS, Roger	HLA Consultants, Edmonton
LaFRENIÈRE, Gerald	Northland School Division, Cadotte Lake
MATE, Zolton	Northland School Division, Fox Lake
MATVEYENKO, Phil	High Prairie School Division, High Prairie
McDONALD, Joan	Grande Prairie Catholic School District, Grande Prairie
McLAUGHLIN, Dave	North Peace Adult Education Consortium, Peace River
MEUSER, Dave	Spirit River School Division, Spirit River
MILLER, Verne	Northland School Division, Jean D'Or Prairie
MOLHO, Joe	Northern Alberta Development Council, Swan Hills
MUNRO, Dean	Northern Development Branch, Peace River
MURPHY, Robert	Northland School Division, Peerless Lake
NEWMAN, Audrey	Northland School Division, Atikameg
NEWMAN, Mac	Northland School Division, Gift Lake
O'NEIL, Gerard	Fort Vermilion School District, LaCrete
PETERS, Vic	Fort Vermilion School District, High Level
PLOC, Vic	Peace River School Division, Grimshaw
RENFREE, Paul	County of Grande Prairie, Sexsmith
RENNEBERG, Neil	Fairview School Division, Hines Creek
ROOK, Dean	Fairview Separate School Division, Fairview
RUDD, Randy	Swan Hills School Division, Swan Hills
SCHOEPP, John	Grande Prairie School District, Grande Prairie

SKOCZYLAS, Joe	Peace River Separate School Division, Peace River
SLOAN, Dan	High Prairie School Division, High Prairie
SOO, Tony	Northland School Division, Paddle Prairie
SPENCER, Keith	Northland School Division, Peace River
STAINTON, Dave	Northland School Division, Garden Creek
STICKEL, Otto	East Smoky School Division, Fox Creek
THOMAS, Dave	Superintendent, Whitecourt School Division, Whitecourt
THUNDER, Evelyn	Chairman, Northland School Board, Atikameg
TRELEAVEN, Harvey	Superintendent, Swan Hills School Division, Swan Hills
UHRYN, Shirley	Spirit River School Division, Rycroft
VAN OERS, Al	Northland School Division, Keg River
VIAU, Rhonda	Northern Development Branch, Peace River
WEISS, Norm	Chairman, Northern Alberta Development Council, Fort McMurray
WINDSOR, Ralph	Fort Vermilion School District, Fort Vermilion
WOLF, Edgar	Peace River Separate School Division, Peace River
WYNNE, Harold	North Peace Adult Education Consortium, Peace River
ZUKEWICH, Russell	East Smoky School Division, Valleyview

Peace River Workshop (Northland School Division)

ARCHIBALD, Jerry	Northern Development Branch, Peace River
AUGER, Ruby	Northland School Board, Cadotte Lake
BEATON, John	Northland School Board, Gift Lake
BECK, Marian	Northland School Board, Keg River
BELTRANO, Linda	Northern Development Branch, Peace River
BLESSE, John	Northland School Board, Fox Lake
BLONKE, Frank	Superintendent, Northland School Division, Peace River
CARDINAL, Alex	Northland School Board, Elk Point
CHEECHAM, Dwayne	Northland School Board, Anzac
CUNNINGHAM, Archie	HLA Consultants, Edmonont
CUNNINGHAM, Lawrence	Northland School Board, High Prairie
DUECK, Len	Northland School Board, High Level
DUNN, Elaine	HLA Consultants, Edmonton
FAICHNEY, Christine	Northland School Board, Fort MacKay
FRANZONI, Ed	HLA Consultants, Edmonton
GAMBLER, Harold	Northland School Board, Calling Lake
GAUDET, Jill	Northland School Board, Paddle Prairie
GIBB, Robert	Northland School Board, Peace River
HAGGARD, Peggy	Northland School Division, Peace River
LeFRANÇOIS, Roger	HLA Consultants, Edmonton
LEMAIGRE, Elsie	Northland School Board, Chard
McBAIN, Bryan	Northland School Board, Grimshaw
MICHALCHUK, Karen	Northland School Board, Keg River
MOBERLY, Emily	Northland School Board, Grovedale
NEUMEIER, Bea	Northland School Division, Peace River
NOSKEY, Dora	Northland School Board, Red Earth Creek
NOSKIYE, Doris	Northland School Board, Chipewyan Lake
PUNKO, Marguerite	Northland School Board, Fort Chipewyan
QUINTAL, Andrew	Northland School Board, Conklin
ROBERTS, Mark	Northland School Division, Peace River
SMITH, Evelyn	Northland School Board, Peace River
TALLMAN, Eddie	Northland School Board, Atikameg
WEISS, Norm	Chairman, Northern Alberta Development Council, Fort McMurray
WILLIER, Leonie	Northland School Board, High Prairie
WEBER-PILLWAX, Cora	Northland School Board, Calling Lake
YELLOWKNEE, Charles	Northland School Board, Desmarais

Lac La Biche Workshop

ARCHIBALD, Jerry	Northern Development Branch, Peace River
BELTRANO, Linda	Northern Development Branch, Peace River
BOUCHARD, Ray	Lac La Biche Town Council, Lac La Biche
BOUTIN, Ray	County of St. Paul, Mallaig
BURGER, John	Lakeland RCSSD, Bonnyville
CABAJ, Ted	St. Paul Regional School District, St. Paul
CADIEUX, Richard	Lac La Biche School Division, Lac La Biche
DEUTSCHER, Lloyd	Superintendent, Lac La Biche School Division, Lac La Biche
DMYTRASH, Stan	Northland School Division, Sputinow
DOONANCO, Elaine	Lakeland School Division, Glendon
DUNN, Elaine	HLA Consultants, Edmonton
DUTEAU, Noel	Northland School Division, Conklin
FAIRHILL, Lorraine	Medley School District, Medley
FRANZONI, Ed	HLA Consultants, Edmonton
FINNERTY, Murray	Northern Development Branch, Peace River
FLEURY, Phil	Northland School Division, Janvier
GIRARD, Archie	Lac La Biche School Division, Plamondon
GUEDO, Roliand	County of Athabasca, Athabasca
HENDRY, Andy	Advanced Education, Edmonton
HISLOP, John	Northland School Division, Chipewyan Lakes
JEGLUM, Greg	Fort McMurray School District, Fort McMurray
JEWEL, Pam	REDC, Lac La Biche
KIERNAN, Gary	Lakeland School Division, Bonnyville
KIRYLCHUK, Peter	Lac La Biche School Division, Lac La Biche
KOWALCHUK, Merv	Alberta Education, Edmonton
LALL, Stephen	Northland School Division, Desmarais
LAMBERT, Lyn	Lac La Biche Town Council, Lac La Biche
LANGFORD, Ted	AVC, Lac La Biche
LEA, Dave	Lakeland School Division, Grand Centre
LeFRANÇOIS, Roger	HLA Consultants, Edmonton
McARTHUR, Dave	REDC, Lac La Biche
MOTT, Terry	Alberta Education, Edmonton
MUNRO, Dean	Northern Development Branch, Peace River
NEUMEIER, Bea	Northland School Division, Peace River
OPAS, Ron	Northland School Division, Calling Lake
PALASH, Chris	County of Athabasca, Athabasca
PERCEVAULT, Bruce	Lakeland School Division, Glendon
PONICH, Peter	Lac La Biche School Division, Lac La Biche
PRUDEN, Madeline	Lac La Biche School Division, Lac La Biche
REMILLARD, Lionel	Superintendent, Lakeland RCSSD, Bonnyville
REYNOLDS, Russ	Medley School District, Medley
RICHEL, Sandy	County of Athabasca, Athabasca
SABEY, Ralph	Alberta Education, Edmonton
SHERK, Harry	Alberta Education, Edmonton
SLOAN, Rick	Northern Development Branch, Peace River
SMITH, Winston	County of St. Paul, Ashmont
STRATICHUK, Albert	Lac La Biche Town Council, Lac La Biche
TESOLIN, Ron	Lac La Biche School Division, Lac La Biche
TREDGER, Bob	County of St. Paul, Elk Point
UPHAM, Dick	Northern Alberta Development Council, Ashmont
VINCENT, Charles	Lakeland RCSSD, Bonnyville
WEBB, Jim	Métis Development Branch, Edmonton

WEISS, Norm	Chairman, Northern Alberta Development Council, Fort McMurray
WICKER, George	Lac La Biche School Division, Lac La Biche
YOUNG, Dave	Assistant Superintendent, Fort McMurray School District, Fort McMurray